



**USAID**  
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# USAID FAMILY FARMING PROGRAM

## TAJIKISTAN

**QUARTERLY REPORT: FIRST QUARTER, SEPTEMBER 30-DECEMBER 31,  
2010**

JANUARY 2011

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**Program Title:** USAID Family Farming Program, Tajikistan

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## **PROJECT OBJECTIVE**

The sole objective of the USAID Family Farming Program is to improve the food security of Tajikistan.

It is increasing the volume of agricultural production, raising the income of food insecure households to make food more accessible, and bettering the standard of household nutrition. The Program works with household (subsistence) farms and individual and family dekhan (commercial) farms.

The Program achieves these results by interventions all along the agricultural production chain from input supply through marketing. The Program also works with national policy issues as the need for specific policy reforms is demonstrated by its operations in the villages, and assists in the reform of the national system of agricultural education.

## **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION DURING THE QUARTER**

The first quarter of Program operation was devoted to project start-up.

Technical activities were limited to establishing cooperative relations with various other donor activities, including the World Food Program and DFID, supplying occasional information on specific analytic and data matters to USAID and participating in Government of Tajikistan-Donor Coordination Council working groups on agricultural reform, an activity FFP staff had already been involved in during previous assignments in Tajikistan.

By the end of the quarter the Chief of Party and Grants Manager, the only two expatriates called for in the original project design, had long been mobilized and were at work, a 10-person initial local staff was in place, the Program had moved into its permanent office in Dushanbe, and discussions with Winrock International about the merger of the Water Users' Association Support Project into the FFP, scheduled to take place gradually during the next two quarters, were well under way and general agreement on how to handle the merger had been reached.

In December 2010, Ms. Petra Geraedts, the former team leader of the European Union "SENAS" project that had been charged with developing agricultural advisory services in Tajikistan, spent three weeks in Dushanbe as a short-term consultant to the Program inventorying and assessing the status of private agricultural extension and advisory services in the country. Her report, which was completed in draft form just before the end of the quarter and includes very lengthy appendices, was submitted separately to USAID in January 2010. Because of its length, it is not appended to this quarterly report.

During the quarter the Program was required to submit its Branding and Marking Plan, Grants Plan, Year One Work Plan, Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP), and Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (EMMP). All these deliverables were submitted on time.

The Branding and Marking Plan, required within one month after Program inception, was returned by USAID with requests for minor alterations. Those changes were agreed by the FFP Chief of Party and the USAID Mission to the Central Asian Republics outreach coordinator in November 2010 and the amended BMP resubmitted. Approval for it was received in January 2011.

The draft grants manual was submitted as required 60 days after Program initiation, in November 2010. The USAID COTR acknowledged its receipt. As of the date of submission of this quarterly report, no comments on the draft grants manual have been received by the Program from USAID. Further analysis

of the Program's tasks and development of the work plan and EMMP indicate that some changes to the Grants Manual will be needed in any event. The Program grants manager is now developing a subcontracts manual, which was not required in the USAID FFP contract. It may be incorporated in the final grants manual or remain a stand-alone document.

Several DAI home office technical staff, including Christopher Reynolds, home office project team leader, Dave Besch, Agribusiness Practice Manager for DAI, Steve Romanoff, senior principal development expert and environmental specialist, and Brody Dittmore, Geographic Information Systems specialist, visited the Program for periods of one to three weeks in December 2010 to assist in preparing the work plan, PMP and EMMP. Mr. Romanoff took primary responsibility for the EMMP; the others were collective products.

The exceptionally broad scope of the Family Farming Program offers a real chance for innovative and successful development work in the difficult environment of post-Soviet, post-colonial, and post-conflict Tajikistan. However, the many components of the Program present organizational and administrative challenges.

Because of the size and scale of the Program, DAI anticipated that, following contract award, considerable attention would need to be devoted to organizational issues and to coordination with the Program's many potential partners. This assumption has turned out to be the correct. The first workplan has taken longer to develop fully than would have been preferable because of the time needed to rethink it and align it with the PMP, EMMP, and a revised Program organization chart and staffing pattern.

These developments are, in part, the result of some unforeseeable bad luck.

The Chief of Party was already in Dushanbe when the contract was awarded. DAI had originally expected that, following the quick formalization of his employment, Senior Advisor for Special Projects Max Goldensohn would come to Dushanbe to assist in the initial development of the work plan. Unfortunately, there was an unexplained delay in receipt of the contract by the DAI home office in Bethesda, Maryland, and during that hiatus Dr. Goldensohn was urgently called to Kabul. Shortly after contract award, in mid-October 2010, the Prospect Medical Clinic in Dushanbe advised the Chief of Party to return to the US for medical attention, as local analysis of an ear inflammation he had developed over the summer of 2010 while working in Tajikistan suggested a condition that might threaten hearing loss or other serious complications and the condition was not responding to treatment locally. The Chief of Party did go home, was examined at the University of North Carolina hospitals in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and given a course of steroids to reduce the inflammation. No serious complications were found. He is scheduled to go home again for follow-up examination in March 2011. The unexpected home trip allowed him to spend several days in Bethesda at the end of October, 2010 for consultations and retraining in DAI management systems, as some standard procedures had changed since he had left DAI employment in 2006.

DAI has not recently operated as a prime contractor in Tajikistan. To do so, DAI needed to organize a Tajik legal entity. Without such a local legal presence, staff cannot be formally hired, providing funds for project operations is more difficult, and, in general, work is made more difficult. The initial reconnaissance during proposal preparation correctly reported that, in large part thanks to the hard work of previous USAID projects in the country, organizing a company subsidiary in Tajikistan should be a relatively quick and easy process. DAI began preparing the needed documents for registration of a subsidiary in Tajikistan as soon as the contract was awarded. However, in large part because of the CoP's

unexpected absence from post, those efforts were not properly followed up. The DAI Board of Directors was not asked to adopt the resolutions needed to set up “DAI Tajikistan” until December 2010, and they were not received in proper form by the Program in Dushanbe until mid-January 2011. As a result, as of the submission of this quarterly report, DAI Tajikistan has only just completed legal registration.

As a further consequence of the delay in creating a legal entity to operate in Tajikistan, there were some difficulties with financing of the project. The chief of party paid substantial project expenses out of pocket in November-December 2010, and others were billed to corporate credit cards by the chief of party and short-term visitors from Bethesda. Since DAI’s systems are not designed to audit and approve major project expenses submitted by individuals as, in effect, travel advances, most of those expenses have not yet been cleared by the DAI home office. Although all staff were paid on time, local staff salaries and most other field costs from the first quarter have not yet been billed to USAID because of those delays in internal verification.

## **PLANNED MAIN ACTIVITIES FOR THE SECOND QUARTER, JANUARY-MARCH 2011**

### **FIELD OPERATIONS**

A fundamental change in Program design was to shift focus on areas of work from administrative districts (*nohia*), more or less comparable to American states in their place in the government system, to work in selected villages of selected jamoats, the lowest-level government agency in Tajikistan and roughly equivalent to a county or township in the US.

In December 2010 the Program assembled an initial list of 59 Jamoats throughout Tajikistan that, based on preliminary analysis and the opinions of Tajik experts, were the most food insecure in the country. Although the validation of this list and the development of better information and methods for site selection continues, Program staff have already begun systematic initial visits to these jamoats. During the quarter, the Program anticipates piloting its community-level assessment procedures and organizational techniques in several of them. Preference is being given to locations where WUASP is already operating as a further way of easing its transition to the Family Farming Program.

### **BASELINE STUDIES, SECTOR APPRAISALS AND POLICY WORK**

The Program expects to agree with the World Bank and other donors to participate in and partly finance two large studies of farm restructuring, rural livelihoods, and the political economy of the agro-food sector in Tajikistan during the quarter. Data from these studies will not be available until late in 2011 or early 2012, but for a relatively small investment the Program, the donor community and the GoT can get considerably more and better information about subjects of interest to the Program.

The Program also expects to host a short-term consultant to design its own study of the relationship between household farms, the larger farms and their markets during the quarter. Timing for this activity remains uncertain, however.

The Program will finalize and begin piloting village assessment instruments during the quarter.

The Program will design and begin carrying out a major study of agricultural gross margins and possible alternative crops during the quarter.

The Program will work closely with the Ministries of Agriculture, and, through WUASP, with the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources on the continuing Donor Coordination Council-GoT agricultural reform activities.

### **FINALIZE AND OBTAIN APPROVAL OF WORKPLAN, PMP AND EMM**

Early in the quarter, the Program expects to finalize and have approved its basic operational documents.

### **ADDED STAFF**

The Program will at least double its local professional staff during the quarter, as well as hiring and fielding its first staff based outside of Dushanbe as part of piloting its efforts in selected rural jamoats. The Program may also formally hire the first staff transferring from WUASP. However, if the WUASP budget permits them to remain formally employed by that project, it would be preferable to do so until WUASP closes even if people begin physically moving from the present WUASP office to the USAID FFP one.

It quickly became clear once the Program began that far too much depended on the Chief of Party, as his temporary incapacitation dramatized. Therefore, the Program has requested and received approval for the hiring of an expatriate Agricultural Extension specialist with long experience in Tajikistan, Rutger Persson, who will mobilize to join the project early in February 2011. Winrock has changed its budget to allow for the hiring of a long-term Deputy Chief of Party, and as of the date of submission of this report, is expecting to issue a hiring letter within the next few days to Ms. Marydean Purves, former head of Mission East in Tajikistan. She should return to Tajikistan as the FFP DCoP by the end of the quarter. Finally, DAI has conducted an internal search for a junior-level Operations Specialist to be resident in Dushanbe for a year, and as of the date of submission of this report has issued an offer to Ms. Miriam Counterman for that position. She, too, should be in place in Dushanbe before the end of the quarter.

The additional staff should greatly strengthen Program operations.

### **DAI BASIC SYSTEMS IN PLACE AND FUNCTIONING**

DAI's project management systems require considerable computer horsepower. The proprietary project management TAMIS system, which is essential to the management of a project with as many actions as the USAID FFP, is built on Lotus Notes and requires regular exchange of large amounts of data with Bethesda. DAI's internal audit and compliance standards require that the Family Farming Program use its Oracle-based Field Accounting System, as well as related financial management tools also built on the Oracle RDBMS. These programs also require reliable, high-speed internet access to DAI Bethesda. So does access to much of DAI's institutional memory and accumulated project results, which are available on its internal "Portal" website.

Although the decision has been made to buy most user hardware in-country, a large quantity of computer equipment to set up the core of those systems is now being configured in the US prior to shipment to Tajikistan. It is expected to arrive about the end of February 2011, after which DAI IT, TAMIS and FAS specialists will serially arrive to install and configure it and to train local USAID FFP staff in its use.

The investment of time and energy in these core DAI systems has been and will be substantial, but once they are fully up and running they will greatly ease the task of Program administration and management. All of this setup should be completed by the end of the second quarter.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BMP	Branding and Marking Plan
CoP	Chief of Party
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
DAI	Development Alternatives, Incorporated
DCC	Donor Coordination Council
DCoP	Deputy Chief of Party
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EMMP	Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Plan
FAS	DAI Field Accounting System
FFP	Family Farming Program
GoT	Government of Tajikistan
IT	Information Technology
PMEP	Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
RDBMS	Relational Database Management System
TAMIS	Technical Assistance Management Information System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WUASP	Water Users' Association Support Program